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## **LSU College of Music and Dramatic Arts Names Christopher O’Riley as First Distinguished Visiting Artist**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 9, 2009

BATON ROUGE – The LSU College of Music and Dramatic Arts is proud to announce its collaboration with internationally renowned pianist and media personality Christopher O’Riley as its first Distinguished Visiting Artist from 2010 to 2013.

The announcement came during a press conference held Wednesday, December 9, in the newly renovated Claude L. Shaver Theatre in the LSU College of Music and Dramatic Arts.

O’Riley hosts “From the Top”, the award-winning NPR and PBS classical music series that has become the preeminent showcase for young musicians over the past decade.

“I am honored to be working with the LSU College of Music and Dramatic Arts. I look forward to collaborating with faculty and students as well as bringing ‘From the Top’ to communities in Louisiana,” Christopher O’Riley said.

As part of O’Riley’s appointment, “From the Top” will record an episode on the LSU Baton Rouge campus and collaborate with the university for a two- to three-year series of community engagements, partnerships, arts leadership and communication activities. This partnership will enhance performing arts programs in the community as well as encourage student participation and skill building in the performing arts.

“As the dean of the College of Music and Dramatic Arts at LSU, I’m very proud that we will be starting a three-year association with piano artist Christopher O’Riley, as well as the popular NPR program ‘From the Top,’” said Laurence Kaptain, dean of the LSU College of

Music and Dramatic Arts. “He comes to us as someone who has stepped beyond the traditional role of a concert artist sequestered on the stage. He has embraced technology, media and popular culture while retaining his high artistic values. The residency of Christopher O’Riley as a performing artist and media personality demonstrates the new linkages that LSU must make with national media as well as popular culture.”

Through award-winning NPR and PBS programs, online media, a national tour of live events and education programs, “From the Top” shares the stories and performances of pre-collegiate musicians with millions of listeners and viewers each week. In all, 2,000 artists ages eight to 18 from nearly all of the 50 states have been featured on the “From the Top” radio and television programs. Over the years, the programs have also featured prominent guest artists including Yo Yo Ma, Hilary Hahn, and Bobby McFerrin, Midori, Denise Graves, Bela Fleck, Joshua Bell and more.

Launched in 1999, the program reaches more than 700,000 loyal listeners each week. The show connects with a broad audience and is praised by teachers and parents as “accessible, educational and entertaining,” with “real kids” and “real value.”

“From the Top” has taped more than 200 radio broadcasts in America’s premier concert halls – reaching more than 200,000 live audience members in 33 states. Beginning with the 2010-2011 season the show will add LSU’s Baton Rouge campus as a site to tape the show.

The program also works to promote music education. To date, “From the Top” and the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation have invested more than \$1 million in scholarships to high achieving pre-collegiate musicians with financial need. In addition, “From the Top’s” Arts Leadership Program encourages and mentors young performers to share their music with new audiences and give back to their communities.

The LSU College of Music and Dramatic Arts will serve as the program’s major sponsor during the residency, along with Baton Rouge-based Lamar Advertising. NPR affiliates WRKF-FM Baton Rouge and WWNO-FM New Orleans will begin broadcasting “From the Top” next year.

## **Details on “From the Top” collaboration with the College of Music and Dramatic Arts**

Host Christopher O’Riley’s three-year residency at LSU will have three components:

- **Live events:** A key component of the residency will be “From the Top” live tapings showcasing talented musicians from the taping local area and across the country. These tapings are community-building events for local families, groups and civic organizations, and are produced in partnership with the state’s arts presenters. Through demonstrations and talks before and after the concerts, children and adults to meet and learn about music and the young musicians who perform on the show.
- **Arts leadership training:** The three-year residency will include events outside the concert hall that expose local youth to “From the Top” peer role models age nine to 18. “From the Top’s” Arts Leadership program enables young artists to recognize and articulate their unique talents and perspectives, create innovative ways to share their talent and ideas and return to their communities empowered as cultural leaders. These roles communicate the message that all children, regardless of background, can achieve their goals with discipline, passion and focus.
- **Community outreach:** Residency activities conducted in the community and in school day and after school settings include education programs, live Arts Leader performances, Web-based activities and discussion forums and/or a regional essay contests. The flexibility in programming allows “From the Top” to reach the entire school-age population, or a targeted age group of students. In keeping with the belief that all children need active exposure to and involvement in the arts to fully develop their potential, the show’s education initiatives reach young people from a range of backgrounds, including those with the fewest resources.

The affiliation with “From the Top” has numerous global effects as well for the university, Kaptain said.

“This will position LSU and the College of Music and Dramatic Arts as a player in the national landscape of the performing arts, increase name recognition and establish a brand, provide a model for students that goes beyond the theater and music and performance element into communication and technology skills areas, allowing us to make community presence and development a priority both at LSU and in Louisiana public and private schools,” he said.

The source of funding for all aspects of the program will be designated funds from outside of the college, and designated funding from donors interested in building the reputation and brand of the College.

The role of the College of Music and Dramatic Arts is expanding, Kaptain said, moving beyond providing vital first-stage support, to fostering individual creative self-awareness, expression and personal growth.

“In addition, we are also interested in motivating our students, faculty and community partners to reach out and explore the potential of emerging areas of public consciousness,” Kaptain said. “Through the appointment of Christopher O’Riley, the residency of ‘From the Top’ and our new linkages with public radio stations in Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Shreveport and Lafayette, we will explore new ways to examine and challenge cultural and social barriers where they encounter them, react creatively to the vibrant dynamics of our society and recognize our own accountability as active and necessary contributors to this culture.”

To learn more about the LSU College of Music and Dramatic Arts, visit <http://www.cmda.lsu.edu>.

To learn more about Christopher O’Riley, visit <http://www.christopheroriley.com>.

For more information on “From the Top,” visit <http://www.fromthetop.org>.

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